

the increased number of absentee ballot requests that are anticipated. So, as we can plainly see, election officials in jurisdictions impacted by Hurricane Katrina will face numerous logistical challenges as they prepare to conduct upcoming elections.

We understand that FEMA, under its Public Assistance Program, is obligated to cover the expenses for replacing damaged voting equipment and restoring destroyed polling places in jurisdictions that have been designated Federal disaster areas. And for jurisdictions with upcoming elections but whose permanent polling places are currently uninhabitable, FEMA has a responsibility to pay the costs for setting up temporary polling places such as tents or trailers. The funding provided by FEMA, if it is disbursed in a timely manner, should go a long way towards restoring the election infrastructure in areas ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. It remains to be seen, however, whether such monies will be sufficient to bolster all aspects of the voting systems that were affected by the recent catastrophe.

As Chairman of the committee with jurisdiction over the administration of Federal elections in our country, I along with the ranking member, Senator DODD, will continue to vigilantly monitor the situation in the states impacted by Hurricane Katrina to ensure they are receiving the resources they need to fully restore their election infrastructure to pre-Katrina levels. As more information becomes available, we will assess whether additional funds may need to be appropriated to assist the impacted jurisdictions in reconstituting their election systems. We will also make sure FEMA follows through on its commitments and responsibilities.

In conclusion, the right to vote in the impacted regions of the Gulf Coast must not become a further casualty of Hurricane Katrina. We must work to ensure that it does not. Essential election infrastructure will need to be restored. And those who had to be evacuated as a result of Hurricane Katrina and who continue to be displaced from their homes must be afforded the full opportunity to participate in the democratic process in their home communities.

I again want to thank my friend Senator DODD for his leadership on the issue of election reform and look forward to continuing to work with him on this important matter.

Mr. DODD. I thank our Chairman, and my good friend, and commend him for his leadership on this issue. I look forward to working with him to ensure that, no matter the devastation of this natural disaster, all eligible citizens will be able to continue to participate in this democracy through the ballot box.

#### BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, this month we observe National Breast Can-

cer Awareness Month, and reflect on a disease that has touched countless American lives. There are more than 3 million women living with breast cancer in the United States and tens of thousands of women die from breast cancer each year. Breast cancer is now the second leading cause of cancer deaths in American women. While important advances have been made, the causes of this disease and the means to prevent it are still unknown.

Scientific evidence about what aspects of the environment play a role in the initiation and development of breast cancer also remains scarce. Although it is generally believed that there is a correlation between environmental factors and the prevalence of breast cancer, the extent of the environment's role is not well understood. Given the clear need to explore the potential relationship between the environment and breast cancer, I have introduced S. 757, the Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act. This bill would authorize \$30 million per year for 5 years for the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, NIEHS, to award grants to study the relationship between environmental factors and breast cancer. Under a competitive, peer-reviewed grant making process, the Director of NIEHS would award grants for the development and operation of up to eight centers for the purpose of conducting multidisciplinary research. The bill would seek to foster community collaboration between the research centers, patients, and the patient advocacy organizations.

The targeted research proposed in S. 757 holds the promise for a better understanding of the causes of breast cancer, breakthroughs in prevention and treatment, and ultimately a cure. For this reason, I urge my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring S. 757 so that we may work together toward Senate passage this year.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STEVEN A. VALDEZ

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I honor the life of a young Arkansan who, in the name of freedom, paid the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of the Nation he loved. Steven A. Valdez was a brave soldier who died a hero in a foreign land, but he was also a caring young man who deeply loved his family and friends and they were never far from his mind.

Those who knew Lance Corporal Valdez from his childhood in McRea, a small north-central Arkansas town, remember him as competitive, energetic and fun loving. He graduated from Beebe High School in 2004 and, soon after, followed the footsteps of his older brother Glenn Skaggs, and his grandfather Billy Skaggs, into the United States Marine Corps.

In November of 2004, LCpl Valdez reported to the Marine Corps Base at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. Serving with the

2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, he was deployed to Afghanistan in June as a machine gun operator with Weapons Platoon Company E. Within the year, his family received a letter from the Marines, which cited Valdez's promotion to Lance Corporal and praised him for going above and beyond what was asked or expected of him. While serving in Afghanistan, LCpl Valdez was stationed at Camp Blessing. The camp is located in eastern Afghanistan, in the foothills of the Hindu Kush mountains near the Pakistani border, and serves as a forward operating base for intelligence and military operations aimed to train Afghan security forces and track down al-Qaeda terrorists. He served with a platoon of Marines guarding the camp.

While serving in Afghanistan, LCpl Valdez and his grandfather, Billy, had an agreement; Billy would send care packages with his grandson's favorite snacks and items from home, but he would also include phone cards with the expectation that the young marine would call his grandfather once a week. For LCpl Valdez, it was a much needed respite from the stresses of war that allowed him to feel a little closer to home; for Billy, it was reassuring to hear his grandson's voice and to know that he was safe and healthy.

On September 26, insurgents attacked Camp Blessing with mortar, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire. LCpl Valdez was struck by shrapnel from a mortar while running to his machine gun post. The brave 20-year-old died shortly after.

In remembering their loved one, LCpl Valdez's proud grandfather speaks of him as a "true hero." When his brother, Sergeant Glenn Skaggs, returns to Iraq, he will be concerned about his own well-being, but only in the sense that he doesn't want to put his family through another grieving process. Despite these concerns, in a manner typical of this courageous and selfless family, he proudly states "My brother was over there for something he believed in, and I want to help finish it."

Although Steven Valdez may no longer be with us, his legacy and his spirit will forever live on in our hearts. On behalf of a grateful Nation, my thoughts and prayers go out his family, friends, and all who knew and loved him.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2005

• Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate